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III. GOOD OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRISON LABOR

By HARRIS R. COOLEY,
Commissioner of Charities, Cleveland, O.

The Correction Farm of Cleveland is a part of a great tract of nearly two thousand acres, or more than three square miles, on which are the tuberculosis group, the almshouse group and also an extensive municipal cemetery to be graded and developed by prison labor. The area is so large and diversified that the almshouse group is a mile and a half from the correction group and two hundred feet higher. Each of the four divisions is distinct on its own estate of five hundred acres. In seven years over eight thousand men have served time out on the farm.

We have found it an especial advantage that the correction farm is a part of a group of four estates comprising the two thousand acres. It secures the absolute control by the city of a vast environment of more than three square miles. In the colony or almshouse group and the tuberculosis group there are many who can only do light work. If there is to be furnished a large opportunity for light work in the fields and gardens as a basis for this, there must also be a large amount of rough, heavy work. This can readily be supplied from the strong, hardy men of the house of correction. Thus the institutions supplement each other in the fullest development of the farm.

If there comes as a prisoner an expert carpenter we can set him to work in the light, airy shops of the correction buildings, making mission chairs and tables for the old people. He is working at his best, which is good for him. In addition, he is conscious of adding to the comfort of some aged, or crippled, or sick resident of the farms.

In the spring of 1905 we began in Cleveland the outdoor treatment of crime by taking "trusties" and other prisoners from the city workhouse to our farms and lodging them in the old, scattered houses. Our farmer neighbors were frightened. Our friends prophesied that the prisoners would all run away. But the plan worked. Most of the men completed their sentences, giving faithful and

willing service. We ourselves have been surprised at times at the results of some of our ventures with these men. The confidence placed in them, the useful work in garden and field, the tonic of the sky and trees, developed a new sense of honor and a common sentiment that it is a mean and cowardly thing to run away from the farm.

A visiting judge said to me: "It is so fine out here, I should be afraid some of the prisoners would want to stay." Nearby a group of the men were shoveling dirt into a grading wagon. I said to him: "Judge, you see those men at work; they are drinking an abundance of pure water, they eat heartily, they sleep well. They say to themselves, 'This is not 'made work,'" this is real, genuine work. Free men right over there are getting a dollar and a half a day for doing this.' The old prison cell, the food, the confinement of their labor, tended to depress them and to make them hopeless. This treatment quickly brings them to themselves and arouses the normal man. There is a psychological element, which you have not thought of and which we did not fully foresee, which makes these men more anxious to go back and again take their places in society and industry. At the expiration of their sentences they go out without the prison pallor, stronger in the face of temptation, and ready at once to do a full day's work."

There is a marked difference in the feeling of the prisoners. They work much more heartily. Some of them take great interest in the animals and the growing fruits, vegetables and grains. They are freer from jail sullenness and hang-dog ways.

When the contractor was ready to start on our correction square, there developed an unexpected scarcity of water. We built a concrete dam, dug out the earth for a pond, laid over a mile of two-inch pipe and in five and a half days had an abundance of water with forty pounds gravity pressure. The workhouse men entered into this emergency work with as much earnestness and enthusiasm as if it were their own. This spring, out of a group of fourteen prisoners, we asked for four men to volunteer to work on Sunday in the sugar camp. The entire fourteen freely offered their services in the saving of a large run of sap.

The trust and confidence which we, of necessity, place in them call forth the remnant of manliness which asserts itself. Its whole tendency is to develop in them a spirit of honor to do one's work

and to put away the thought of escape. Their language about it changes. To break out of the old prison is a "get-away;" to run away from the farm is to "take a sneak."

They have better air to breathe and better food to eat, and like the rest of us their dispositions are therefore more agreeable. They have an abundance of fresh vegetables in season, for they raise them by their own labor in their gardens.

Of these opportunities for useful work one of the most promising is the development of the cemetery. When developed this will be a magnificent municipal cemetery of five hundred acres which will bring back several millions into the city's treasury. The development is largely in the nature of walks and drives and the planting of trees and shrubs according to government statistics. Prison labor is most effective in building roads. These roads are private and are thus free from the objections of the public highway. Again, working in the cemetery may have some moral effect on the prisoners.

Allowing more than half the acre for drives and planting, there would be in each acre twenty thousand square feet still to be sold as lots. Fifty cents per square foot is a moderate amount to be paid for a burial lot in a large, well-kept cemetery. This would amount to \$10,000 an acre. This amount, of course, is not realized at once and must include and provide for future maintenance, but to those municipalities which maintain cemeteries it presents an opportunity for the profitable use of prison labor. It is good for the prisoners to work in the open, and because of its returns, it will justify the municipality in paying at least a part of what the prisoners earn to their families.

There are limitations, of course, to the outdoor method of treatment. Not all of the men committed can be trusted to work in the fields. Besides those who are locked in, we have two classes, the trusties and the semi-trusties. The semi-trusties work in gangs of twenty or thirty with guards or rather foremen always present. They are kept in the enclosure Sundays and holidays. We seldom have a man drop his tools and run. The temptation comes when not working. The trusties work on the farm sometimes entirely alone.

With this method I am confident that one-half the men can work under the open sky. Near the close of their sentences, it is

usually safe to assign outside work even to the more serious offenders. All of the men can at least be allowed the freedom of the great open court.

In Cleveland we have many prisoners sent to the house of correction for vagrancy. Some of them are self-committed. It is needless to enforce the strictest discipline in these cases. If the men run away and take care of themselves, the purpose of the law has been accomplished. If they disappear, the result is much the same as when the court orders them to leave town. If they are really seeking work, they stay with us, as we can help them to find employment. These cases make our reports of escapes, which are ten per cent, seem large, but it has proved the best method of dealing with our problem.

A penitentiary or state reformatory must of course be organized and managed differently. The general method has been tried in many places. At Witzwill, Switzerland, is a large tract of nearly two thousand acres with two hundred and fifty prisoners under sentences for as long as five years.

At Merxplas, twenty-five miles from Antwerp, is a great estate with five thousand prisoners, some of them with sentences as long as seven years. These five thousand irregulars and unfortunates are controlled and directed by a staff of only eighty wardens. Out of a barren waste they have made a million-dollar estate.

In the Berlin labor house at Rummelsburg, out of two thousand prisoners, one thousand work outside on the great sewage farms owned by the municipality. In France, Holland, Hungary and Italy the government has made successful experiments with the colony system for the treatment of offenders. On this side of the Atlantic, in the Province of Ontario, in Colorado, in Missouri, in California and in the City of Washington, a similar work is carried on.

Of necessity much depends on the personality of the warden and his ability to have his subordinates of like spirit. Too much emphasis cannot be given to the attitude and the personality of those in charge. With the right spirit and wisdom in the officials, there is no reason why this outdoor method may not be adapted to all of our penal institutions.

The growing feeling of interest on the part of the public in the work of the farm, and the fact that the men are really doing useful work, are now raising the question whether society ought not

to allow the family of the prisoner at least a part of what he earns, and also whether he should not have something paid to him at release so that he will be better fitted to take again a normal place in life. This awakened feeling toward prisoners is expressing itself in probation and parole, in prison schools, in homes and in employment bureaus for released men. It is also strengthening public sentiment that prison management should be utterly divorced from partisan politics.

At Cleveland the most important thing the correction farm has demonstrated is that the city has become kinder and broader with its more rational and humane treatment of its prisoners. The heart of Cleveland has grown in its sense of right and justice. Instead of contempt and malice, there has come a desire "to know the path up which the crime has come," and the general disposition to give opportunities for normal lives. The reflex influence is really the larger part of the benefit. For its own sake society cannot afford to be cruel and brutal to its meanest and most unworthy member. Russia is to reap a more bitter harvest than her exiles. Love your enemies is a good social law. Even though all the prisoners do not at once respond to this treatment and "make good," this does not destroy to society the quality of this mercy. Old methods often made institutions of detention breeding places for disease and schools for crime. Recent research has brought to light the fact that there are three times as much tuberculosis among our prisoners as in our general population. The moral contagion is revolting.

The vilest deeds like poison weeds,
 Bloom well in prison air;
It is only what is good in man
 That wastes and withers there.

Civilization and progress no longer halt at the prison doors. Winston Churchill declared in the House of Commons that "the attitude of the public in regard to the treatment of crime and criminals is one of the best tests of the civilization of any country." The general movement of which the colony is a part is both timely and wise.